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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

COMMODORE CHARLES STEWART.

Of the many triumphs over prejudice furnished by the annals of the brief national career of the United States, there has perhaps been none more signal than that effected by our gallant tars. If the structure and success of our political institutions, have exploded many of the dogmas of the absolutists of the old world, the achievements of our arms have with equal success nullified the generally received notion, that the subjects of a despot are alone capable of winning the highest rewards of military glory. In every contest with a foreign power, on the ocean or on land, our countrymen have shown that the spirit in which this mighty republican fabrick was reared, still exists and is abundantly equal to the task of defence from whatever assailant. But as the prejudice of habit depressed the heart of the nation at the beginning of our struggle for a separation from England, so every improvement of our system which looked to the perfection of our independence, has been the subject of cavil, and adopted in opposition to the misgivings of many honest and intelligent minds. Like a modest youth of merit, who has just assumed the responsibilities of manhood, we lacked that confidence which can only spring from the consciousness of strength arising from its exercise. Thus the establishment of the American navy was viewed, even by its advocates, as an enterprise of doubtful results. Its opponents were loud in their prophesies of failure, and, sometimes unscrupulous in their denunciations of its friends. The supremacy of Britain on the ocean, was so universally admitted, that conjectures were entertained by many of the most patriotic and experienced of our statesmen, of the ability of our marine to cope with so formidable an adversary. The

glare of her achievements and the charm which seemed to surround her well appointed fleets, excited in almost every breast the most acute forebodings of discomfiture. The intelligent enquirer was startled by the brilliant record of her victories on every sea, and over every foe that dared question her right of "dominion on the mountain wave." So exhaustless were her resources and so ample was her active force, that the contrast furnished by a comparison with our restricted means and very limited armament, produced general despondency. But the hour of trial at length arrived, and how soon were all these doubts dispelled! How quickly was apprehension of failure superceded by universal confidence! The world beheld with astonishment the singular spectacle of a people, whose independent existence had been but just acknowledged, contending on the ocean against a power whose invincibility all Europe had been compelled to admit, and plucking from her brow some of the greenest laurels which adorned it. The feeling of contempt and scorn with which our unpretending marine was regarded by the haughty "mistress of the seas," soon gave place to respect. The "bit of striped bunting," no longer marked a victim upon which her cruisers might prey with impunity. The forecastles of our merchantmen were no longer the resort of her press-gang. A seaman's "protection" from the American government, ceased to be received with jeers or deridingly cast into the face of the honest tar who offered it as his passport. The world was taught to consider the decks of our trading vessels, as inviolable as the actual soil of the

"Free hearts' only home."

Our naval exploits in the last contest with England, marked an era in the history of our country, scarcely inferior in importance to that of 1776. To the latter we were indebted for a place in the family of nations: to the former we owe the acknowledgement of our power to maintain it. Through the skill and gallantry of this "right arm of our National defence," the remotest tribes of barbarians have been made acquainted with our power and forced to honor our flag. Its officers, who embody the true American character, are representatives of the nation abroad for whom their countrymen have never had occasion to blush. By their courteous and gentlemanly demeanour, they have contributed mainly to awaken that general sentiment of respect for the republic which is manifest from our commercial and friendly relations with every quarter of the world. Is it then surprising that the service has attained a place in the affections of the people, from which nothing can dislodge it? Is it singular that it has become the favourite of the nation, or its glory the pride of every American heart?

There have been few, if any, of its officers who have done so much to surround the navy of our country with the halo which encircles it, as the gallant subject of the following memoir. As able and wise in council, as he was calm, brave and successful in the strife of contending fleets, he may be pointed to as the personification of the spirit of the American Navy. One of the most profound international jurists which our country has produced—a forcible, convincing and eloquent writer, possessing a capacious, well cultivated and liberal mind, replete with a knowledge of every department of his profession—a republican wedded to the principles of the Jeffersonian school—an American in every sympathy of his nature and every impulse of his heart—he occupies the highest post in the service and enjoys the rich reward of the veneration of his country.

Charles Stewart was born in Philadelphia, on the 28th of July, 1778,—the month after the British army evacuated that city. Both of his parents emigrated to this country from Ireland. His father, Captain Charles Stewart, was a native of Belfast, and his mother, Sarah Stewart, was a native of Dublin. It was his misfortune to lose his father, who, prior to the revolution, commanded a ship out of Philadelphia, in the London trade, before he had attained his second year. He was the youngest of eight children. On the death of his father, his mother was left, in the midst of the Revolution, with four children to provide for, and with limited means for their support and education. Being, however, a woman of talents and great energy, she was not found unequal to the arduous task thus devolved on her.

At the age of thirteen, Charles sought and found employment in the merchant service, in which he gradually rose, through the several grades, from the situation of cabin boy, to the command of an Indiaman; when, in the full tide of successful mercantile enterprise, he relinquished all that he had toiled for, and offered himself to the service of his country.

His father, who had experienced to his regret the uncertainty of the sea, as a last request had restricted his children from engaging in any occupation that might be liable to similar reverses. But Charles, who was gifted with a

bold and enterprising temperament, longed to follow from his earliest years, that very path from which he had been thus debared; and, in spite of every diversion which maternal anxiety could devise, his ardent aspirations finally became so intense to go out in the next voyage with a captain who was a friend of the family, that he obtained a reluctant consent from his surviving parent, who hoped that the rigours to which at the tender age of thirteen he would be exposed, would forever quench his boyish yearnings. But in this she was doomed to be disappointed: for, though after a short voyage, her son returned to his home and school, his taste for the sea was increased, and such remarkable aptitude and zeal did he exhibit, after two or three voyages, that he passed rapidly through the various grades, until he was advanced to the high and responsible command of a large ship, at the surprising age of nineteen. Reaping in this position large rewards for his employers, and honor for himself, he soon relinquished the prospects of gain that were opening before him, and burning with nobler impulses, accepted in his twentieth year a commission as Lieutenant in the service of his country, which at that time offered but few inducements other than those of honorable ambition and but slender emoluments. He received the fourth commission made out in the Navy, which was dated the 9th of March, 1798. He was soon after ordered to join the frigate United States, then in command of Commodore John Barry. He continued in this ship until July, 1800. Part of this time the frigate was employed in the West Indies, to look after and restrain the French privateers, and to protect our commerce against their depredations, in which service she was eminently successful. In the latter part of the year the frigate was engaged in transporting to France the commissioners for treating with that country, and was thus deprived of the opportunity, which under different circumstances, might have led to other and higher honors.

On the sixteenth of July, 1800, Lieutenant Stewart was appointed to the command of the United States schooner Experiment, of twelve guns, in which he sailed on a cruise to the West Indies, having under his command those distinguished officers, Porter, Caldwell, and Tripp. Arriving on the station assigned him, he fell in with, on the night of September the first, the French armed schooner Deux Amis, (Two Friends,) of eight guns, and brought her to action, which terminated in ten minutes; the Deux Amis having struck her colors, she was sent to the United States for condemnation. Being short of water he proceeded to Prince Rupert's Bay, in the Island of Dominica, and while there, watering his vessel, his Britannic Majesty's ship—, Captain Nash, accompanied by his Majesty's ship Siam, Captain Matson, arrived, and anchored, soon after which, Lieutenant Stewart received a letter from a citizen of the United States, named Amos Seeley, stating that he had been impressed on board the British ship Siam, and claiming an interference for his release. Although Lieutenant Stewart's power was inadequate to enforce his demand for the surrender of Seeley, the two ships mounting twenty guns each, his patriotic heart could not withstand the appeal of his countryman, and, prompted by that chivalry and pa-

triotism which were destined to blaze out in after life so gloriously, he resolved on opening a correspondence with the British Captain for the release of Seeley. A polite note was addressed by Lieutenant Stewart, to the senior officer, conveying the request that Amos Seeley might be transferred from his Majesty's ship Siam to the schooner under his command; that he might be restored to his family and his home. The British captain demurred, but in answer requested a personal interview, wherein he remarked to Lieutenant Stewart, that the war in which his Majesty was engaged was arduous, that the difficulty of obtaining men for his numerous fleets and ships of war was great, and that he should encounter great hazard of being censured by his government should he lessen his force by yielding up his men; urging moreover, that the example would be injurious to the service. Lieutenant Stewart replied, in substance, that the British officers had too long trampled on the rights and liberties of his countrymen, and it was high time that they had learned to respect the rights and persons of an independent nation; that, whatever power his Majesty claimed over his own subjects, he had no right to exercise it over a people who had forced him to acknowledge their independence; that to resume this power was to belie his own solemn act, and practice a deception on the world. It was stated in his answer, that Seeley was impressed in England as an Englishman; to which, Lieutenant Stewart replied—"Then prove him so, and I have done; but if you cannot, I am prepared to prove him a citizen of the United States." Whereupon, it was agreed to surrender him; and Seeley was put on board the schooner.

Having obtained a supply of water, he left the Bay and continued his cruise under the lee of Barbuda. At day light on the thirtieth of September, two vessels were discovered, bearing down on the Experiment, with all sail set, and English colors hoisted. The Experiment continued laying too with the British signal of the day flying, until they approached within gun-shot, when finding one to be a brig of war of eighteen guns, and the other a three masted schooner of fourteen guns, and that they would not answer the signal, Lieutenant Com. Stewart determined to retreat from such superior force, and avail himself of any opportunity that might offer for cutting off one of the vessels. It was soon discovered that the Experiment could outsail them, and after a fruitless chase of two hours, on the wind, they gave up pursuit, hoisted French colors, fired a gun of defiance to windward, and kept their vessels off before the wind.—He being now satisfied of their character and force, manœuvred to gain their wake to windward, and thus become the pursuing vessel in his turn. Sail was crowded on the Experiment, and at about eight o'clock at night, she came up with the three masted schooner (then the sternmost vessel,) and taking a position on her larboard quarter, poured in a broadside. In a few minutes, the three masted schooner struck her colors and surrendered to the Experiment. She proved to be the French National schooner Diana of fourteen guns, commanded by Captain Perandeau, Lieutenant De Vaisseau, with a detachment of thirty invalid soldiers, and a crew of sixty-five men, and General Rigaud, on board, on his way to France,

under the convoy of the brig of war, which made her escape, and got into St. Bartholomew. The prize was despatched to the United States, under the command of Lieutenant James R. Caldwell, and was restored to the French under an article of the treaty, but the captors were never compensated by the Government for this vessel, as others were in many cases.

After disposing of the prisoners at St. Christopher, Lieutenant Stewart continued on his cruising ground, and recaptured a number of American vessels which had been taken by the French, and thus rescued a considerable amount of valuable commerce from the grasp of their privateers—amongst which was the brig Zebra, of Baltimore, captured by the Flambeau privateer, of sixteen guns, and in her company at the time. The wind was so light, and the day so nearly over before he could approach, that he could only cut off the Zebra, and the Flambeau made her escape, under the cover of the night, and reached Guadaloupe.

On the sixteenth of November, at midnight, he fell in with an armed vessel, and after repeatedly hailing and requesting her to heave-to, that a boat might board her for the purpose of ascertaining her character, and receiving no answer or other satisfaction, he determined to bring her to action, and try his force to compel a compliance. The vessel kept up a running fight with great spirit and determination, for forty minutes, when she became so cut up and crippled by the Experiment's fire, that she was obliged to strike and submit to be boarded. She proved to be the Louisa Bridger, of Bermuda, carrying eight nine pounders, with a stout crew of Bermudians. She was so much injured that the officers and crew of the Experiment were occupied until three o'clock next day in repairing her damages. Having two shot through her bottom, she was almost in a sinking condition, and when Lieutenant Porter boarded her, was found to have four feet of water in the hold. After putting her in the best repair that circumstances admitted, Lieutenant Stewart dismissed her on her cruise.—The Experiment had only one killed (the boatswain) and two wounded slightly. The wind, during the action, was strong and squally, and the Experiment careened so much, that Lieutenant Stewart, to enable his guns to be sufficiently depressed, found it necessary to cut three inch planks into short lengths, and put them under the trucks of the gun carriages, to raise the guns sufficiently from the lower port sills.

On the return of the Experiment to St. Christopher, Commodore Truxton ordered Lieutenant Stewart to proceed with a convoy from Martinique to the island of St. Thomas, and thence to Curacao, to look for the United States brig Pickering, and frigate Insurgent, but nothing could be heard of those vessels at that place; they had both foundered in the equinoctial gale, with a store ship under their care, and all hands perished. On leaving Curacao, the Experiment was ordered to proceed to Norfolk. Standing in for the Mona passage, early in the morning, a vessel was discovered in distress, and beating on the reef off Saona Island. On nearing her, many persons were discovered to be on board. After anchoring the Experiment at a safe distance from the reef, he despatched Lieutenant Porter

with the boats to their relief, who, with much difficulty and danger from the breakers on the reef, succeeded in rescuing from destruction about sixty women and children, with seven men of the vessel's crew. They were the families of the most respectable inhabitants of St. Domingo, flying from the seige of that city by the blacks. They had been on the rocks for two days, without any thing to eat or drink; and at the time of their rescue, only a small portion of the quarter deck was above water. After the sailors had recovered as much of the property as they could, by diving into the vessel's hold, the Experiment proceeded to the city of St. Domingo with the rescued persons, where they were all landed the next day, and restored to their friends. Their gratitude was unbounded, and the Experiment was most liberally furnished, gratis, with every refreshment the place afforded. The President of St. Domingo wrote a letter of thanks to the President of the United States (Mr. Jefferson) of which the following is a copy.

Translation of a Letter from Don Joaquin Garcia, Governor of the Spanish port of St. Domingo, to the President of the United States.

SIR:—The great humanity (the offspring of a magnanimous breast) of a military officer of the United States, deserves the greatest applause and consideration from me and my whole nation. It was displayed in his recent conduct towards two numerous families who were removing from this city to Porto Rico, and composed of many small children and ladies of quality.

This officer is Charles Stewart, Esq., captain of the armed schooner, Experiment, who, whilst the accidents of the sea threatened to overwhelm him, observed that near the Island of Saona, a schooner with a multitude of women and children, cried out for help to save themselves from becoming the unhappy victims of the tempest, or of the want of nautical skill in Captain Christian Graneman, a Dane, who, in the hardness of his heart, strove to save his person and effects, by going on shore and leaving so many human creatures exposed to the turbulence of the waves, an extremity which presented to them a near prospect of death.

This brave and generous officer, his crew, and all under his command, impelled by humanity, alertly strove to save these wretched ladies, and succeeded. A few moments after their safety was accomplished, the schooner sank. Amid thanks, vows, and lamentations, this worthy officer learnt that Captain Christian was on the mountain of Saona, with his effects. Without neglecting the ladies, he endeavored to secure a wretch, who ought not to live among mankind. This he effected, and, through the humanity of the ladies, used no greater severity towards him than to take him on board and bring him, well secured, to this capital. He treated the ladies with the greatest courtesy, accommodating them with his cabin, his table, and every convenience. They have requested me to communicate these circumstances to your Excellency, and that in their names, I should present to you their cordial thanks, assuring you that it is an action which will remain forever impressed on their hearts. For myself, and in the name of my nation,

and all who know of the occurrence, worthy of so cultivated a nation and of an officer of the United States, I present you my thanks with that sincerity which belongs to my character; and I shall have the honor to render an account of it to my master, the king of Spain, in order that such an action may redound to the honor of this officer, of his flag, and all his brave and generous crew.

God preserve you many years.

May it please your Excellency,

JOAQUIN GARCIA.

Santa Domingo, Jan. 21, 1801.

On the arrival of the Experiment, in 1801, at Norfolk, she was sold out the service, under the act of Congress fixing the Naval Establishment. Lieutenant Stewart was amongst the thirty-six lieutenants retained under that law, and was placed in charge of the frigate Chesapeake, in ordinary, at Norfolk. In the following year, 1802, he joined the U. S. frigate Constellation, as first officer of Captain Murray, who was ordered to the Mediterranean to blockade Tripoli, then at war with the United States. This was a short cruise of one year, and afforded no opportunity for the ship or officers to distinguish themselves. On her return to the United States, Lieutenant Stewart was placed in command of the brig Siren, then being built at Philadelphia, and received orders to superintend her. Her equipment was effected in seven days after she was launched, when she sailed for the Mediterranean to join the command of Commodore Preble. She was engaged giving protection to our commerce by convoy, and conveying the Consular presents to the Dey of Algiers. The squadron rendezvoused at Syracuse, in the island of Sicily. From that place the Siren was engaged in the expedition sent under Lieutenant Stewart to destroy the frigate Philadelphia, which had grounded off the harbor of Tripoli, and was surrendered to the Bashaw. Lieutenant Decatur was sent in the Intrepid, ketch, with seventy volunteers, to board and burn the frigate, which he accomplished in the most gallant manner; and, with the aid of the Siren's boats, under Lieutenant Caldwell, effected his retreat out of the harbor. After this successful expedition, the Siren, Lieutenant Stewart, with the Vixen, Enterprise, and Nautilus, under his command, were employed in a rigid blockade of the city of Tripoli and the adjacent harbors. During this period, the Greek ship, Catapoliana, and the British brig, Scourge, of twelve guns, were captured by the Siren, for a violation of the blockade. The ship was restored to the Greeks, and the brig put into the service of the United States by Commodore Preble. During this blockade, Lieutenant Stewart frequently led in the vessels of the blockade to the attack of the batteries and flotilla, to accustom the officers and men to the enemy's fire, and to force the Tripolitans to expend their ammunition; and on one occasion, they attacked and destroyed two batteries the enemy had erected to the westward of the city, for the protection of their coasting trade.

On the first of August, 1804, Commodore Preble arrived off Tripoli with the frigate Constitution, two bomb or mortar vessels, and six gun-boats—united with the Siren and

Argus, brigs of eighteen guns, and the Nautilus, Vixen, and Enterprise, schooners of twelve guns, he determined to attack the town, flotilla, and batteries of Tripoli. On the third, the wind proving favourable, at meridian the signal was made to prepare for battle, when the whole force, forming a line ahead, led on by the brig Siren, Lieutenant Stewart, advanced to the attack, and when within reach of the enemy's fire, the gun-boats were cast off; and immediately boarded the gun-boats of Tripoli, twenty of which were moored in a line outside of the reef which formed the harbor. Three of them were carried and brought off under cover of the vessels of war, and added to the American Squadron.

In the general orders issued by Commodore Preble, he expressed himself in the warmest strains of admiration, of the heroic conduct of the officers engaged, and referred in the following terms to the gallant subject of this memoir.

"Captain Stewart of the Siren, Captain Hull of the Argus, and Captain Smith of the Vixen, will please accept the Commodore's thanks for the gallant manner in which they brought their vessels into action, and their prompt obedience to signals,—particularly that to cover gun boats and prizes."

For the whole of this month and part of September, the city of Tripoli and the batteries were kept under the fire of the Squadron, and the bombardments of the mortar vessels—at least whenever the wind permitted the squadron to approach and retreat, they were invariably attacked day and night, until several of their flotilla were sunk, the town and batteries considerably injured, and many of the enemy killed and wounded. The squadron, however, were not without their casualties, whereby the Siren had three officers and eight seamen killed, and thirteen wounded. After this distinguished service, Lieutenant Stewart was promoted to be master commandant, and placed in command of the frigate Essex, which vessel, after the conclusion of peace with Tripoli, proceeded with the rest of the squadron, commanded by Commodore Rogers, to Tunis Bay, for the purpose of checking in that regency a rising disposition to commence hostilities on the flag and commerce of the United States. The hostile attitude of the squadron, while there, induced Mr. George Davis, consul of the United States, to leave the city and seek refuge on board of the fleet. The state of our affairs now drawing to a crisis so serious, it appeared to the Consul General, Colonel Lear, that the flag officer ought to strengthen his acts with the advice and consent of his principal officers; in consequence of which, the Commander-in-chief called a council, consisting of Captains Campbell, Decatur, Stewart, Hull, Smith, Dent, and Robinson, to whom the situation of our affairs with the regency was explained, and the opinion of the officers demanded whether hostilities ought not to immediately commence. At this council the opinion of Captain Stewart carried with it the assent of all the officers, and preserved the peace of the country with that regency. It was on receiving that opinion, as delivered in the council, and transmitted by the Consul General and the Consul, Mr. Davis, to the President of the United States, that Mr. Jefferson expressed to his cabinet, the high satisfaction he felt at having

an officer in the squadron who comprehended the international law, the constitution of his country, and the policy of his government. Captain Stewart gave it as his opinion, that there was no power under the Constitution of the United States which authorized hostilities and war on others, but that which was lodged exclusively with Congress; that the President of the United States could not exercise this power, without the action and authority of Congress, much less a commander of an American squadron; that due respect for the laws of Nations forbade aggression, and only justified self defence by vigilance and convoy for the protection of our citizens, their property and commerce; but where hostile attempts were made on either, he would be justified in seizing all persons engaged in them, but no farther would his country sanction his acts. The policy of the United States was at all times pacific, and especially so with a people remote from our country, with whom we must war under every disadvantage; that we had just terminated a conflict with one of those powers, even more insignificant and assailable than Tunis, at considerable expense—the loss of one frigate and several valuable lives; it was true, the enemy had been forcing war on us, but might we not be punished through disaster, by forcing war upon Tunis; that their threats were well calculated to put us on our guard, but would not justify aggression.

This sound reasoning and discretion prevailed; our Consul was restored to his post, peace was continued, and the Bey of Tunis sent a special minister (Melly Melley,) to the United States, who received every satisfaction at the hands of Mr. Jefferson. On the termination of this affair with the regency of Tunis, Captain Stewart took command of the frigate Constellation and returned to the United States. On his arrival he was promoted to a post captaincy by President Jefferson, an elevation, says the communication of the fact from the Navy Department, "to which his honorable services so justly entitled him." On the 30th of April of the same year the following letter was received by him.

Navy Depart., April 30th, 1808.

SIR:—I herewith transmit to you an impression of the medal, presented to the late Commodore Edward Preble, in pursuance of the resolution of Congress of the 3d March, 1805.

This is given to you, as one of the officers of the navy who honorably participated in the gallant achievement, the memory of which it is intended to preserve.

I have the honor to be, respectfully, sir,
your most obedient servant,
R. SMITH.

Capt. CHARLES STEWART, Philadelphia.

During part of the year 1806 and 7, Captain Stewart was employed in superintending the construction of gun-boats at New-York, and afterwards engaged in prosecuting mercantile enterprizes to the East Indies, the Mediterranean, and Adriatic. During these voyages, he was fortunate enough, through his spirited intercession, to release several of his fellow citizens who had been impressed into British ships of war. On the declaration of war with Great

Britain, in 1812, he proceeded, in conjunction with Captain Bainbridge, to Washington, for the purpose of seeking service; but on presenting themselves at the Navy Department, they were informed by Mr. Goldsborough, the chief clerk, that it had been decided by the cabinet to place all the ships of war in the harbor of New-York, for its defence, the effect of which would be to deprive the marine of all opportunity for distinguished service. They saw at once the injurious consequences of such an order, the disheartening of the service, by such a withdrawal of confidence from the navy; the paralyzing effects, and the national humiliation it would produce in thus tacitly acknowledging the invincibility of the enemy. They determined to make an effort to arrest it, and immediately stated their apprehensions to the Secretary of the Navy, and asked him what the navy had done, that its members were to be deprived of so favourable an opportunity of plucking trophies from their renowned enemy on his own element, the ocean wave.—The Secretary of the Navy stated the anxieties of the government on the subject, and that nothing had perplexed them more—apprehending that our very limited marine would be immediately overwhelmed and crushed by superior force and numbers. The inexperience of our officers generally, the want of artillery practice in our seamen, who were not inured to scenes of blood, seemed to forbid their being opposed to a marine which had triumphed over every flag in every sea, with the advantages of twenty years' constant practice. To this formidable array of cautious reasons, they replied with arguments that convinced the Secretary of the erroneous position, and a spirited letter written to the President that night, by Captains Stewart and Bainbridge, convinced him also. He immediately directed the Secretary of the Navy to send the vessels of war to sea, to seek their enemy, and he would take the responsibility on himself. Mr. Goldsborough, who was acquainted with the contents of that letter, sought it in vain at the hands of Mr. Madison, for insertion in his work on the Naval History of the United States.* On the twenty-second it was determined by the President, in conformity with the suggestions of these officers, that the ships should be sent to sea, and to sea they were forthwith ordered. Captain Stewart was appointed to the command of the brig Argus and Hornet sloop of war, which vessels formed a part of the squadron of Commodore Rogers, but were ordered to withdraw for the purpose of allowing Captain Stewart to make a dash with them amongst the British West India Islands.† This command was accompanied by a private letter, dated 23d June, 1812, from the Secretary of the Navy. We only extract the last sentence of it to show his feeling towards Captain Stewart.

" You know not how you have risen in my mind by the *magnanimous* conduct you exhibited yesterday. May God Almighty bless you, and crown you with success and honor.

Signed,

PAUL HAMILTON."

* The author presumes the President thought this letter too important a cabinet secret to be divulged.

† In consequence of the squadron under Commodore Rogers having left the waters of New-York, this order was not carried into effect.

So great was the confidence of President Madison in the skill and talent of Captain Stewart, that he invited him to take charge of the Navy Department and become a member of his cabinet. The captain, like a true sailor, replied to the chairman of the committee on naval affairs of the House of Representatives, through whom it was tendered, that "he was yet young and had rank, and all he desired was glory!"

It would be difficult to unduly magnify the obligation thus imposed on their country, by the timely, patriotic, and successful interposition of Captains Stewart and Bainbridge. But for their remonstrance, where would have been those annals of daring exploits and naval heroism which now occupy the brightest pages of our history, and constitute our highest claim to military glory? Where would have been those thrilling records of maritime achievements which have rendered our flag in the eyes of all nations, the emblem of invincible naval gallantry, and our name in the ears of the remotest barbarians, synonymous with skilful seamanship and dauntless bravery? Their place might have been supplied by the evidence of inglorious and unavailing gun-boat defences—abortive and humiliating attempts to protect the firesides of our countrymen living in the great cities, as well as on the seaboard and on the North-western frontier, exposed to the incursions of a ruthless foe. How nobly did the brother officers of Stewart and Bainbridge, justify the opinions which they expressed to the President and the head of the Naval department! By their valor on the ocean and on the lakes, they verified their predictions, and accomplished the highest hopes and brightest anticipations of their countrymen.

In November, 1812, the Secretary of the Navy under President Madison, addressed a letter to Captain Stewart, proposing questions of importance in relation to ships of war and their organization. His reply evinced that clearness and vigor which mark every thing emanating from his powerful mind, and displayed a fullness and precision of acquaintance with every department of the Navy, which have so long rendered his opinion conclusive on every subject which he touched. We regret that our limits will not permit us to publish the masterly answer of Commodore Stewart.

In December 1812, he was appointed to the command of the Frigate Constellation, then repairing at Washington. This ship was equipped, and ready for sea, and Captain Stewart embraced the occasion to give a splendid entertainment on board that vessel, to all the branches of government, and the citizens of the District. There were upwards of eight hundred ladies and gentlemen on board, where they passed without accident a most agreeable day, and returned to their homes at night, delighted with the entertainment and hospitality of her commander. Soon after, the citizens of the District gave a return ball to Captain Stewart, and the officers of the navy. It was *at this ball*, about *ten o'clock at night*, that Midshipman Hamilton, the son of the Secretary of the Navy, and the aid of Captain Decatur, arrived with the flag of the Macedonian frigate and the despatches of Captain Decatur,

giving an account of his having captured her with the frigate United States. The dancing ceased, the flag was spread on the floor, and the despatches read to the President, and the assembled ladies and gentlemen. To describe the scene which followed would require a more graphic pen than we hold. The reader might well be left to his own reflections and feelings, and glorious sympathies. Nor will he, we are certain, omit to recur to that gallant impulse which led Stewart and Bainbridge to Washington, to remonstrate against the inglorious policy that had been adopted, of shutting up our ships and the way to those brilliant scenes which lighted up the ocean and the lakes with such unfading glory! We cannot resist the impulse to say something of that memorable occasion. The building, large and commodious as it was, as the flag lay in the midst of the brilliant assembly, literally trembled to its foundation with the plaudits. Ladies were seen laughing and weeping with joy; gentlemen embracing one another; members of Congress who were opposed to each other in the morning, on questions concerning the war, were found in each others arms; the opposers of the war recovered for the moment, their lost patriotism, and in the arms of their democratic colleagues, their hearts beat in unison with each other over the glory acquired for their country, while the tears of gratitude streamed from their eyes, and fell on the prostrate flag of Britain. *The venerable Macon*, forgetting his stern consistency, exclaimed, "I never behold an officer of our navy, without the expansion of my heart making me feel as much affection for him as I could for my brother." In the general confusion and loss of *all* personal distinction, through the patriotic feelings of the moment, the *President* himself received the fraternal embrace of a federal senator. In this room, and on this occasion, the Secretary of the Navy, (Mr. Hamilton,) stated to those assembled, "IT IS TO CAPTAINS STEWART AND BAINBRIDGE YOU OWE YOUR NAVAL VICTORIES." We do no more than repeat the history of the times, when we say, that *it was to the victories of our brave tars, on the ocean, over the English, that the first impulse and success of the war are to be fairly ascribed.*

Unprepared, at its commencement, the *nation divided* on the question, and the fleets of the enemy hovering on our shores, doubt and darkness enveloped *its* declaration, and made the boldest hearts quail. Who that remembers that day, will ever forget the shouts of joy which rang through the land, as victory upon victory was announced, and flag after flag of the proud mistress of the deep bowed to the star spangled banner of freedom! The national pulse beat high in every bosom; and every valley, and every hill top, sent forth its song of praise. Our cities, towns, and hamlets blazed with illuminations, and our armies marched joyfully to battle. The spell was broken! The foe had been confronted, on his *own* element, ship to ship, man to man, and gun to gun, and never had the stars and stripes of our country come down. The heart of the traitor shrivelled up within him, and the notes of despair died upon his lips. Our foe was struck aghast at his defeat, and trembled as he grappled with us, on sea and land. Mr. Madison's administration acquired strength, his friends

confidence, the people hope, and the army and navy assurance of victory and fame. Such were the results of the noble counsel of Captains Stewart and Bainbridge, and such the glorious fulfilment of their predictions! One only of these chivalrous heroes lives to witness the deep and lasting gratitude of his country. Death has set his seal upon the other, and *sanctified his memory in the affections of his countrymen*. The fruits of their generous patriotism will long be seen in our elevated national character, in the glory of our arms, in the potency of our influence, and in the arrest of the ruffian hand of impressment from touching the humblest head that seeks shelter beneath our "*striped bunting*," once so contemned and despised. American decks are now as inviolable as the American soil, and the proudest foot in the enemy's rank *dare* not tarnish them with rudeness or insult. The last American sailor has been long since dragged into foreign bondage, on the high seas.

Amongst the assembled fashion and beauty on the memorable occasion referred to, we observed Mrs. Madison, Miss Mayo, (now Mrs. Gen. Scott,) the Misses Caton, Mrs. Jerome Bonaparte, and many others. Captain Stewart shortly after proceeded to Hampton Roads, in the Constellation, preparatory to going on a cruize, but unfortunately, the morning after anchoring there, he discovered the enemy approaching his anchorage with a superior force of two seventy-fours, three frigates, and several small vessels of war; he lost no time in preparing to retreat. It being calm with him, he commenced kedging his frigate towards Norfolk; the enemy's vessels approached rapidly with a fine breeze, which however, they fortunately lost off Willoughby's Point, and were, in consequence of the ebb tide, compelled to anchor. The Constellation was kedged up on the flats off Sowell's Point, where she lay aground the rest of the day. Captain Stewart continued to press the river craft and lighten his vessel. In case the enemy, by kedging up their seventy-fours, or by means of a breeze, had reached his position, he was prepared for burning the Constellation. The night flood, however, made; when about eight o'clock, his ship floated, sail was made on her with a fine breeze, boats with lights and pilots were sent to point out the shoals, and at eleven o'clock, P. M., the Constellation was safely moored between forts Norfolk and Nelson, where she afterwards contributed to defend that place, and with her cannon and her crew, repulsed the enemy's attack on Crany Island, and defeated the expedition sent to capture Norfolk and its dependencies.

In the summer of 1813, Captain Stewart was ordered to assume the command of the frigate Constitution, then undergoing repairs at Boston. In December following he proceeded on a cruize. After exhibiting that ship on the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina, about the Bermuda Islands, off the coasts of Surinam, Berbice and Demerara, to windward of the islands of Barbadoes, St. Vincent, Martinico, off St. Christopher's, St. Eustatia, Porto Rico, and Santa Cruz, and destroying the Picton of sixteen guns, a merchant ship of ten guns, the brig Catharine and schooner Phoenix, he chased several British ships of war, and the frigate La Pique, in the Mona passage, without being able

to overtake any of them, in consequence of the worn state of the sails of the Constitution. Captain Stewart determined to return to Boston, and replace them, for the old sails had served throughout the periods of Captain Hull's and Captain Bainbridge's former cruises. In April, the Constitution arrived at Marble Head, in Massachusetts bay, having with great difficulty escaped from the British frigates, the Junon, and La Nymph, of fifty guns each.

In December, the Constitution proceeded on another cruize, under the command of Captain Stewart, having been refitted with great care, and furnished with new sails. On the twenty-fourth, he captured and destroyed, to the eastward of the Bermudas, the brig Lord Nelson, and off Lisbon, he captured the ship Susan, with a valuable cargo, and sent her to New-York. Early on the morning of February 19th, as the Constitution was passing to the southward from the coast of Spain towards the Madeira, with a strong easterly wind, a number of her officers collected at the starboard gangway, and as her commander, Captain Stewart, approached unobserved, he heard them expressing their chagrin that after so long and arduous a cruize on the coast of Europe, no opportunity had been afforded them by the enemy for distinguishing themselves. Captain Stewart joined in their feeling of regret for the cause of their dissatisfaction, but remarked to his officers that they must cheer up, for before the next day's sun should set, they would have an opportunity of being amply gratified. "I assure you, gentlemen," he continued, "that before the sun again rises and sets you will be engaged in battle with the enemy, and it will not be with a single ship." He thought he perceived a slight smile of incredulity playing about the faces of the officers, as they replied, that they hoped his words would be verified. The result proved that what was considered pleasantry or vague speculation, was but another illustration of that peculiar fidelity of judgement, amounting almost to prescience, acquired by masculine intellects in regard to events connected with a favourite profession which is the business of life and the subject of unceasing thought and watchfulness.

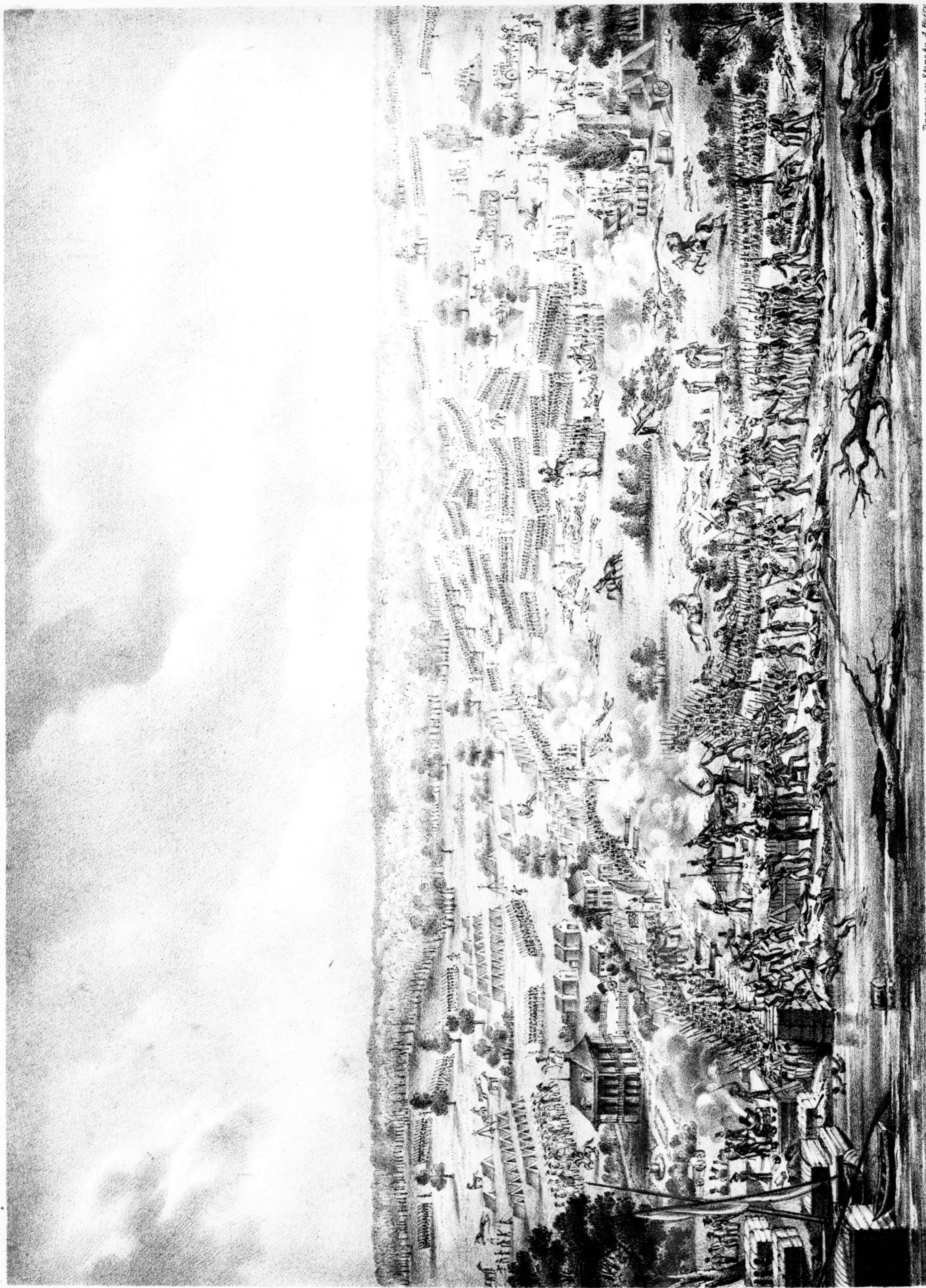
The hammocks were at the time stowing in the nettings and the officers separated. Soon after the Captain retired to the cabin, while the glorious old "Ironsides" dashed over the mountain wave as if eager to fulfil the prediction of her gallant commander. Between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, a large sail was discovered on the starboard or lee bows of the Constitution, standing towards her. Orders were given to call all hands and prepare for making sail, in chase of the stranger. As the vessels were rapidly approaching each other, Captain Stewart did not immediately crowd sail lest the chase might become alarmed and retreat, his object being to get as near to her as possible before night, so as to keep her in sight and prevent her escape. Soon after another ship was discovered, many miles to leeward of the chase, which from being close-hauled to the wind and having a press of sail, left no doubt that she was a consort. About half-past three o'clock the approaching ship threw out her signals of the day, which, being answered, she soon after hauled down, when she bore up for her consort to leeward and commenced a re-

treat before the wind. Captain Stewart then ordered all sail to be made, and in a moment, "old Ironsides" was under a cloud of canvass. The chase crowded also to join her consort. No doubt now remained of their being two of the enemy's ships cruizing together. Captain Stewart had indulged the hope of being able to cut off the nearest vessel, but the Constitution gained on her so slowly that it was near five o'clock before he deemed himself near enough for his shot to reach, so as to cripple her. He discharged the chase gun twice at her, but without effect, he therefore determined to desist firing lest it might impede the sailing of the Constitution and thus enable one or both of the ships to escape. About this time the main royal-mast of the Constitution, being over pressed with sail, was carried away, when the leeward-most ship bore up and steered before the wind in a line with her consort. It then became evident that she was a Corvette of twenty guns or upwards, and the other ship was supposed to be a Frigate. The first Lieutenant of the Constitution, now Commodore Ballard, who was standing near to Captain Stewart to receive his orders, observed to him, "I believe your prediction of the morning, is about to be accomplished, but I perceive that the nearest ship, from a yaw she made which enabled me to see part of her side, has two tiers or batteries and must be at least a 50 gun ship." The Captain replied that she looked too small to be a ship of that class, but might be an old 44 on two decks.* "However," he continued, "be this as it may, you know I promised you a fight before the setting of to-morrow's sun, and if we do not take it now when offered, we can scarcely have another chance. We must therefore flog them when we catch them, whether she has one gun-deck or two."

Every thing having been done to overtake the enemy, and the men being at leisure, the Purser's steward thought it a good time to report the grog ready for serving. The sailors hearing this, deliberately went down to the gun-deck and upset the liquor into the scuppers, declaring that no man should drink until the enemy's ships were whipted, and that if they did not lick them, the numbers in the messes would be so small that it would be hardly worth while to serve out any! This incident, though trifling in itself, affords a striking commentary on the character of the American sailor. He requires no artificial stimulant to render him brave, or any other incentive but love of country, to impel him to perform deeds of valor in defence of the flag and the liberties of his country. About six o'clock, the enemy having attained their object—a postponement of the battle until night had set in—brought to the wind in an open order of line ahead, when the Constitution gallantly closed with them and shortened sail. She took her position on the weather bows of the largest ship and the weather quarter of the other, thus forming a triangle with the three, at about two hundred and fifty yards distance from each, and by that precaution bringing both the enemy's ships under the fire of the Constitution's larboard battery.

* This deception was caused by the Cyane being painted with double yellow sides, and false ports in the waist, which gave her at a distance, the appearance of a double decked ship.

To be concluded in the February No.



Drawn on Stone by H. Lea

F. S. David Littlefield

January 8th 1815.

BATTLE OF WATERLOO - OPERATIONS.

BY VICTOR VINTON

ARMY & NAVY VOL 212